July 4, 1997
(Justice)

Minister comments on Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre

Justice Minister Chris Decker said today that no decision has been made with reference to the Federalization of the Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre.

"Earlier this year, I advised the Mayor of Bishop's Falls that the correctional facility would remain open for this fiscal year. At the same time, I explained that prison population trends have been changing, and the potential for the facility to close in the future is a reality. Given the possibility of closure, I offered to seek alternative uses for the Bishop's Falls facility, not dissimilar to the arrangement the province has with the federal government for sentenced federal inmates to be housed at the correctional facility in Stephenville."

The Department of Justice is currently analysing the feasibility of expanding the role of the Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre for use as a sex offender treatment clinic. The province would provide in-house programming for lower risk sex offenders from Newfoundland and Labrador who are either sentenced to a federal term of imprisonment of more than two years or longer, or provincially-sentenced offenders who would be serving terms of less than two years. Mr. Decker further noted that provincially-sentenced sex offenders have been accommodated at the Bishop's Falls Correctional Centre since it opened in 1983.

"The community has built up a solid resource and networking base over the years to assist inmates. This is a very good reason for wanting to continue the search for alternative ways to sustain the correctional centre," said the minister. "However, even though the province would only consider those offenders who can be safely accommodated, housing federal sex offenders in the Bishop's Falls Correctional Facility will not happen unless the community is satisfied with this option."

The Department of Justice will continue to explore options for keeping the facility open in the future through continued discussions with the residents of Bishop's Falls, the Town Council, provincial Corrections staff and Corrections Canada.

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1997 07 04 11:57 a.m.

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